

Marketing Colloquia

2020 Fall

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Zoom
12:00 PM to 1:20 PM

STATUS PIVOTING

ABSTRACT: Prior research has established that status threat leads consumers to display status-related products such as luxury brands. While compensatory consumption within the domain of the status threat (e.g., products associated with financial and professional success) is the most straightforward way to cope with comparisons to high-status individuals, we examine when, why, and how consumers cope with status threat by choosing to “pivot” and display success and achievements in alternative domains. Using a mixed-method approach combining field and lab experiments, incentive-compatible designs, netnographic analysis, observational study, and qualitative interviews, we show that consumers cope with status threat by signaling their status and success in alternative domains. We conceptualize this behavior as “status pivoting” and show that it occurs because experiencing status threat motivates consumers to adopt beliefs about trade-offs across domains; that is, to believe that status acquisition requires trade-offs and hence others’ success in one domain comes at the cost of success in another domain. We compare the prevalence and appeal of status pivoting to restoring status within the domain of the threat. We further examine when consumers are likely to engage in status pivoting and show that this effect is attenuated when high status within the domain of the threat is attainable.